

Buying green washing and cleaning products in Växjö, Sweden

Background

The municipality of Växjö started early working for a clean environment and has successfully worked with environmental issues for a long time. One of the first big tasks the municipality started with was restoring the lakes around the city. To keep the lakes from being polluted it is important to reduce the anthropogenic impact. One thing the municipality can do to reduce its impact is to buy more environmental friendly products. Washing and cleaning products can be very harmful for the environment if the wrong products are used and in the wrong doses. In 2002 Växjö municipality carried out a procurement of washing and cleaning products.

Objectives

The aim of the procurement was to offer the municipal purchasers environmentally adjusted washing and cleaning products. By doing so the environmental impact from these kinds of products is expected to decrease.

Environmental requirements on washing and cleaning products are rather common in Sweden. There have been ecolabelled washing and cleaning products in Sweden for many years. There is a variety of environmentally friendly products to choose on. There is national guidance on how to describe legally correct requirements through the Swedish instrument for ecologically sustainable procurement (the EKU-instrument – www.eku.nu/eng). The Swedish Environmental Management Council (SEMCO)¹ is responsible for improving and developing the EKU-instrument in cooperation with enterprises in order to widen the use of the instrument towards the private sector. Växjö municipality started the procurement from the EKU-instrument and the criteria on professional cleaning products. The municipality environmental policy was also an influence in the procurement.

Implemented measures

The call for tender was announced in spring 2002. In the call for tenders there were five types of criteria, placed in order of preference. The criteria concerned function, environment, price/price level, service and commercial conditions. The products were, beside the special environmental criteria, also evaluated regarding working hygienic criteria and ergonomics. These criteria considered:

- If the products were classified as allergy causing (according to KIFS 1994:12)
- Whether there were dosing instructions on the package for products with manual dosing (in Swedish)
- If the packages were made as one single or several easy separable materials that all could be recycled as material or recycled as energy
- If the plastic material in the inner and outer packages was labelled with DIN 6120-1, 6120-2 or similar

¹ The Council is a company jointly owned by the Swedish state, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities, the Swedish Federation of County Councils and the Confederation of Swedish Enterprises.

- If the products contained any perfumes
- If any of the chemical products that would often be lifted weighed more than 3 kilograms
- How high up from the floor containers for dish chemicals and dry chemicals would be placed

Considerations on size of package, information on the “product information sheets” and the ergonomical performance of the cleaning equipment were also made.

In the first appendix of the call for tenders information about the company was required. Here it was described that the purchasing units would strive to act according to the current environmental policy and purchase products that are environmental friendly. The companies were to describe if they had an environmental management system, environmental policy, environmental targets, etc. This was not evaluated in the selection process but only used as information.

Appendix number four consisted of specific environmental requirements. There were both compulsory requirements and award criteria. The compulsory requirements were:

- Surfactants that are used have to pass the demands according to OECD’s Guidelines 301A-F
- Substances that are (according to directive 67/548/EEG; KIFS 1994: 12) classified as toxic, very toxic, carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic for reproduction with the indication of danger toxic (risk phrases R23, R24, R25, R26, R27, R28, R39, R40, R45, R46, R48, R49, R60, R61, R62, R63 and R68) according to the Swedish National Chemicals Inspectorate regulations KIFS 1994:12 with amendments or the EC Directive 67/548/EEG with amendments. (with the exception of 3.6.2 Instrument disinfection products in closed systems and 3.4.6.2.1 toothpaste with fluorine)
- The product is not considered environmentally hazardous according to the EU directive 1999/45/EG and KIFS 1994: 12
- The package material has to be free from PVC

There were also specific compulsory requirements for six different products (cleaning agents, washing up detergent, dishwasher detergent, toilet/sanitary cleaning agents, laundry detergent and floor polish/detergent. The requirements were the same for all six products. The products should achieve the criteria on one of the following eco labelling:

- The Swan (the official Nordic eco label introduced by the Nordic Council of Ministers)
<http://www.svanen.nu/Eng/>
- Good environmental Choice eco label (criteria ratified by the secretary-general of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation)
<http://www.snf.se/bmv/english.cfm>
- The Flower (European eco-label)

Results and impacts

The estimated value of the contract was about 4 million Swedish kronor (approximately €430,000) per year.

There were seven companies submitting a tender. No complaints or reservations on the environmental requirements were mentioned.

Transferability and lessons learned

A new procurement action for washing and cleaning products will be carried out soon. The call for tenders will consider the new municipality environmental program and environmental policy. The requirements in the call for tenders will most likely be influenced by the EKU-instrument.

Contacts

Ida Oddbjörn (procurement legal expert)
Box 1222
SE-351 12 Växjö
Sweden
Ida.Oddbjorn@kommun.vaxjo.se

Tele: +46 470 410 41
Fax: +46 470 410 58